(c) whether the proposed power plant would also supply power to Safdarjung Hospital; and

(d) by when the power plant is likely to be operational?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRI A. RAJA): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. A proposal to set up a gas-based power plant of 21.6 MW is under consideration of AIIMS. The proposal had been framed by BHEL and had been got scrutinized by the institute from IIT, Delhi. Further technical scrutiny is currently under process.

(c) At present, there is no such proposal.

(d) If the project is found to be feasible techno-economically, subject to availability of funds, the proposal will be placed before the EFC.

News-item, "Doctors in a fix over pre-natal test rules"

18. SHRI KARNENDU BHATTACHARJEE: Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news-item, "Doctors in a fix over pre-natal test rules", which appeared in the Hindustan Times, dated 4th June, 2002;

(b) if so, the details thereof and Government's reaction thereto; and

(c) the steps proposed to be taken to address the problem raised in the news-item ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRI A. RAJA): (a) to (c) Government has seen the news-item. According to the news-item, some doctors are fearing that :—

(i) the proposed amendments to the Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (Regulation and Prevention of Misuse) Act, 1994 would prevent routine ultrasonography to diagnose diseases in women.

(ii) Ultrasonography is only an aid to the invasive or surgical procedures and not the pre-natal diagnostic procedure itself.

(iii) Doctors could be harassed or booked for conducting routine ultrasonography for violation of the Act.

(iv) Of the 299 complaints filed for violation of the Act, only two relate to sex-determination.

(v) The proposed ban on pre-conception sex selection would prevent use of ultrasonography even on a non-pregnant woman.

(vi) Monitoring of developing foetus would become impossible leading to increased number of children with congenital disorders and high maternal mortality rate.

Since ultrasonography/scanning, which is capable of determining sex of foetus of a pregnant woman, is the most potent tool used for determining sex of foetus normally leading to female foeticide, the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India has directed that bodies organisation using ultrasound machines scanners registered under the Act and ultrasound machines/scanners of such orgainsation as have not got themselves registered under the said Act may be sealed and seized. Neither the existing Act nor the amendments thereto prohibit the use of ultrasonography for rational and ethical use at a place registered under the Act. However, ultrasonography as a pre-natal diagnostic technique can be used only for the purposes specified in section 4 (2) of the Act, which is subject to any of the condition listed in section 4(3). Violation thereof is punishable under section 23(3) of the Act. At present there are more than 335 cases or which have been filed in various Courts/Police by States/UTs against violators of the provisions of the said Act. Though majority of these cases relate to non-registration and non-maintenance of records, there is a large number of cases for detection of sex of foetus of pregnant women.

The sex ratio of the country has already fallen from 972 in 1991 to 933 in 2001. The position is still worse in the case of child sex ratio in the age group of 0-6, which has come down from 945 in 1991 to 927 in 2001. The position is also adverse in the relatively well off region of the country like Punjab, Haryana and Delhi. It is, therefore, necessary to take remedial measures for arresting its decline before it is too late. Female foeticide and the emerging technology of selection of sex before conception are some of the factors responsible for the same. The PNDT Act as well as the proposed amendments thereto are aimed at reversing the trend and improve the sex ratio of the country.